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AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT PLEDGES TO ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT, RAISE SALARIES...

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Speaking to journalists in Baku on 20 January during a ceremony to commemorate the 14th anniversary of the Soviet military intervention in that city, Ilham Aliyev said he will expedite implementation of his November 2003 decree streamlining procedures for foreign investors, Turan reported. He stressed that economic development will make it possible to raise public-sector salaries and welfare payments. Aliyev singled out the Karabakh conflict as the most important problem facing Azerbaijan, stressing that the OSCE Minsk Group should draft new proposals to resolve it. He said that if a negotiated solution proves elusive, Azerbaijan has the right to use force to bring the region back under its control. He said he has no plans for a sweeping government reshuffle.